

James Dougall 1896–1980: Architect of Post-War Scottish Foreign Mission Policy

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Introduction

The years after the Second World War proved to be a watershed for the international missionary work of the Church of Scotland. Politically, the Church's three main mission fields changed out of all recognition. India and Pakistan attained independence in 1947, the Communist revolution took place in China in 1949 and the wind of change which would bring independence swept through Africa in the 1950s. Parallel to these political developments was the emergence of a vigorous indigenous church in all of these fields, bringing the challenge of handing over responsibility for Christian witness from the "mission" to the "church". Serving as General Secretary of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee from 1946 to 1960, James Dougall had the responsibility to guide the Church through these stormy waters.

Born on 8 April 1896, educated at George Watson's College, Glasgow Academy and Perth Academy and completing his M.A. at Glasgow University in 1919, James Dougall had been ordained in 1923 and immediately undertook a major responsibility in Africa as Secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1923-24. This Commission, the initiative of New York based philanthropists, examined the situation throughout Africa in order to determine how best education might be developed. Its Reports led to the colonial Governments taking much greater responsibility for education in the African community. For Dougall it was a unique opportunity to develop an extensive familiarity with the African situation. He therefore already had wide experience when he began his work in Kenya where from 1925 to 1931 he served as Principal of Jeanes School in Kabete, and from 1932 to 1936 as Educational Adviser to the Non-Roman Missions in Kenya and Uganda. His eleven years there left him with a deep sense of identification with

Africa and its people. He returned to the U.K. in 1936 to become a Secretary of the Conference of British Missionary Societies, a position which enabled him to develop the wide range of contacts and connections which he would exploit to the full during the next twenty years of service in the secretariat of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, as Associate Secretary from 1940 to 1946 and General Secretary from 1946 to 1960. On his retirement, the Committee recognised that "with his unique knowledge and experience of the World Church, his outstanding gifts and his unusual insight into the nature of missionary trends, he has been the guide, inspirer and formulator of the policy of the Committee in recent years".¹ Finally, he was elected to serve as Convener of the new Overseas Council, which brought together all the Church of Scotland committees concerned with overseas work, from 1964 to 1969.

Dougall was alert to the reality that the world was rapidly changing and that the missionary enterprise would have to change to meet the new situation. As he wrote to Ralph Morton early in 1950: "Some of us feel very strongly that the time has come for a new approach to our missionary obligations and that without any presumption on our part that we know better than our fathers, but simply that the situation has changed in all the fields as well as in the Church at home".² In preparing the Report of a Special Committee on Policy established at that time, Dougall therefore made the point that its "enquiry starts from the assumption that the world in which the Church lives has so changed that the particular form of the mission of the Church to the world has to be re-examined and restated.... It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the missionary task for this generation involves new perspectives, means and methods if we are to be faithful to the Truth which marches on".³ It was a time of ferment and a time of reform. Dougall sought to bring his understanding of the missionary task and apply it to the

¹ *Reports to the 1960 General Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1960), 474-75.

² J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. T. Ralph Morton, 7 March 1950.

³ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, 352.

rapidly changing context. In this exercise a number of themes featured prominently and these proved to be formative in giving shape to the overseas mission engagement of the Church of Scotland in the second half of the twentieth century.

1. The Primacy of Evangelism

A theme to which Dougall returned again and again is the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church. It might seem to be stating the obvious to say that the missionary enterprise is about sharing the Christian faith with those who do not adhere to it. Yet Dougall was deeply aware of the possibility of being distracted from this primary purpose. When the Foreign Mission Committee was wrestling with the great changes in the international scene which unfolded after the Second World War, its 1950 Statement of Policy, drafted by Dougall, might easily have begun with the new context in which it found itself. Instead, it takes as its starting point the good news of Jesus Christ and the outreach which it demands:

The expansive power of the Gospel is the very nerve of the missionary enterprise and the Church lives by it and lives for it. So also the deepest need of the Church and Mission is not better organisation or training or self-support, but a firmer apprehension of the Gospel as a glorious fact, not aspiration, as indeed the fulfilment of God's gracious promises in Jesus Christ through the Spirit's presence with His Church. The Policy Group therefore would put as the primary emphasis the possession of great and good news which it is our privilege and duty to share, believing, as we do, that it is God's will that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all men until the Kingdom of God comes in all its fullness.⁴

This reflects the characteristic approach of James Dougall. While, as we shall see, he took a very broad view of the nature of Christian mission,

⁴ *Ibid.*, 349.

he cherished above all its evangelistic core. Anything which distracted from the essential task of sharing the good news about Jesus Christ was the object of suspicion. A primary guiding principle for Dougall was his conviction that "... the traditional and central urge of missionary enthusiasm has always looked beyond the Christian community to those who were without, to the people who sat in darkness because the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ had not illumined their hearts and lives".⁵ As he surveyed the situation around him in the immediate post-war period he noted "... the urgent need for a recovery of the evangelical impulse. By this I mean a concern in the Church at home to witness to what God has done for men through His mighty acts in Jesus Christ, and through that witness to bring individuals to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. So stated, evangelism is the life-blood of the missionary movement".⁶

In Dougall's mind, a particular danger to which the missionary enterprise was exposed was that of having its energies absorbed in administration. It was a question of the good being the enemy of the best. No one would dispute that a great deal of good was done by the assiduous labours of thousands of missionaries who administered the great educational, industrial and medical institutions which the missionary movement had created. To take, for example, the Foreign Mission Committee's work in Africa and Jamaica, Dougall noted that "... the schools with which we are associated number over two thousand, with a staff of between four and five thousand teachers and an attendance of some 180,000 pupils.... The complicated financial arrangements of fees and government grants, the appointment and dismissal of teachers and the administration of the system are still in the hands of missionaries".⁷ The difficulty which registered itself with Dougall through many reports from the field was that missionaries were

⁵ J.W.C. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1963), 92.

⁶ J.W.C. Dougall, "Education and Evangelism", *International Review of Missions*, 36 (1947), 313.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 315.

so exhausted by the demands of administrative work that they were scarcely able to attend at all to the primary task of evangelism.

A prime example was the Report of the Commission which examined the Church of Scotland's work in central and southern Africa in 1946-47: "Nothing impressed the Commission more than the danger of losing the distinctly evangelistic note in missionary effort. The passing of the first generation of converts, the legitimate concern for Church stability and organisation, the multiplicity of administrative problems worrying the missionary, the encroachments of Government regulations due to grants-in-aid, above all, the shortage of African helpers, evangelists, pastors and others – all these easily combine to blur the missionary vision and distract attention from the priority and distinctiveness of the Gospel and its embodiment in a fellowship".⁸ Such reports impressed on Dougall the conviction that a time of retrenchment might provide an opportunity to re-focus on the primary aim of the missionary effort. As he wrote to Lesslie Newbigin at the end of 1949: "You will have seen from my recent circular letter that we are facing the possibilities of severe retrenchment but that we don't regard it as an unmixed evil. I feel sure that if only we could use it properly we might do something to recover the simplicity and directness of the missionary aim which has been so obscured by our missionaries undertaking too much and being immersed in administration".⁹

In the Reports which he drafted for the General Assembly in the post-war years, the aspiration to break new ground often came to the surface. The Africa section of the Report to the 1948 General Assembly included the question "... what of the new areas to be reached and the old areas to be more effectively occupied? One missionary has recently reported that 'those members of staff who have visited the north know of a vast area larger than Scotland almost untouched by missionary enterprise.' The era of pioneering the Gospel is far from over".¹⁰

⁸ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, 361.

⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to the Rt Rev. Bishop J.E.L. Newbigin, Madura, South India, 30 December 1949.

¹⁰ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, 359.

Reflecting on the situation in Nigeria it goes on: "Away to the north lie the more open grasslands and the Obudu Hills. There lies the direction for our Mission advance, reserved by inter-Mission agreement; but no advance is possible until, with the solution of the problem of administration of the existing stations, men are released for pioneering once more".¹¹ The north of Ghana captured Dougall's missionary imagination in a similar way and it was prominent in reports he drafted for reasons astutely discerned by Elizabeth Hewat in the concluding words of her chapter on Ghana: "In 1957 the Scots began work at the new station of Sandema – the effort being specially noteworthy in showing that the days of pioneer work are not over, and in demonstrating the cooperative endeavour of African and Westerner to discharge their missionary responsibility among a people who as yet know not Christ".¹² When the 1950 Statement of Policy was discussing the handing over of institutions to the indigenous church, it raised this possibility: "Where possible, the transfer of responsibility from Mission to Church should be used to release missionary effort and money from long-established work in order to do more for the opening up of new fields of experiment".¹³ The eye for the frontier, for the new departure, for the opportunity to take the gospel of Christ where it had not been heard before – this was at the heart of the strategic thinking developed by James Dougall. Even as he was about to retire, in his final circular letter to the missionaries in India and Pakistan he made the point that: "the more we try to do in and through institutions and inter-church aid ... the more necessary it is to concentrate on the unfinished evangelistic task of the Churches".¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹² Elizabeth G.K. Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956, A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches United in the Church of Scotland* (London, 1960), 250. See further Abraham Berinyuu, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ghana* (Accra, 1997).

¹³ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, 351.

¹⁴ J.W.C. Dougall, farewell circular letter to missionaries in India and Pakistan, 14 March 1960.

2. Social Vision

By mid-century, there was already a clear division appearing within Protestant Christianity between those whose understanding of mission centred on evangelism and personal conversion and those who stressed the transformation of the whole community. Whereas at the start of the century, many would have understood themselves as both “evangelical” and “ecumenical”, these steadily became the watchwords of two separate camps. In this increasingly polarised context, Dougall’s zeal for the priority of personal, one-to-one evangelism could not be questioned. Yet combined with it was a broad vision of the renewal of society under the influence of the gospel. In one of his earliest writings he had already made this clear: “For the Christian missionary, as for his Lord, there can be no conflict between individual conversion and social regeneration, between God’s grace in the human heart and Christian discipleship, between continuous evangelism on the one hand and education with a dominating Christian motive on the other”.¹⁵ It was characteristic of Dougall’s perspective when the Foreign Mission Committee Report to the 1957 General Assembly stated that “Mission in the Biblical sense is the task of the whole Church to the whole life of the world.... Many have conceived it as reaching with the Christian message every human being on the surface of the globe. That is part of it. But human life has depth as well as extension”.¹⁶

This perspective was one which he sustained through all his years in office. He shared with Max Warren, his counterpart at the Anglican Church Missionary Society, a suspicion of any tendency to separate sacred history – *Heilsgeschichte* – from the outworking of history as a whole.¹⁷ The conviction that the whole of history belongs to God and is the stage on which the drama of God’s purpose is unfolded is one which would unite these two notable post-war General Secretaries. As Dougall

¹⁵ J.W.C. Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa* (London and New York, n.d. [1929]), 10.

¹⁶ *Reports to the 1957 General Assembly*, 426.

¹⁷ See Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), 139–40.

stated in his Duff Lectures of 1962: "One reason ... for our interest in politics, though it must not be regarded as standing by itself, is that we cannot obtain a hearing for the Gospel if it has nothing to say about the struggles and fears, ambitions and evils of which men are most conscious in Africa today – and this applies to the white African as well as the black or brown African. And are they to blame if they turn away from a Gospel which has nothing to say to them in their present historical situation? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of all history, ancient and modern".¹⁸

The Duff Lectures, given shortly after his retirement, gave Dougall the opportunity to reflect in some depth on the need for a broad social vision to guide Christian mission in Africa. This led him to some words of Joe Oldham, mentor to many missionary leaders in the first half of the twentieth century:

If the Church were to cease to interest itself in the economic, social and intellectual advancement of the peoples of Africa and occupy itself mainly with caring for the 'souls' of Africans through its evangelistic and pastoral work, a separation would be made between the religious growth of the African and his growth as a human being. The development of his natural powers and the improvement of his earthly existence would come to be regarded as something secular and would be set in competition with his spiritual allegiance. The sense of the unity of life, which is so strong in the African, would be sacrificed and the full meaning of the Gospel as having to do with the redemption of man's whole life would be obscured. If, on the other hand, the energies of the Church should become absorbed in humanitarian and cultural tasks, in a multiplicity of activities directed to intellectual and social improvement, the Church would have betrayed its trust. These

¹⁸ Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 37. Later in the book Dougall quotes Warren's passionate plea "to see that the Church is concerned with the whole of life...", *Ibid.*, 80.

activities are saved from corruption and emptiness only when there shines on them a light from the eternal world.¹⁹

This, to Dougall, was a challenge to which practitioners of Christian mission must apply themselves:

We must not underestimate the immense difficulty of maintaining this bifocal conception of the Church's task and mission in Africa. We know how seldom any Church or congregation can live consistently in accordance with this standard even in a country with a long tradition of Christian culture such as our own. How much more difficult for a Church in Africa to walk this narrow way between self-centredness, introversion, clericalism on the one hand and humanitarianism, activism and secularism on the other. The scope of the Church's task is so much broader in Africa than here in Britain where the State and the community have undertaken most of the social and welfare services required by the modern community. Just because the Church in Africa is so close to the people, just because religion is integrated with the common life to a degree now seldom understood by us, the task in Africa is harder though the reward is nearer at hand.²⁰

In his theology of mission, Dougall continuously protested against what he described, borrowing R.H. Tawney's words, as "a dualism which has emptied religion of its social content and society of its soul".²¹ In one of his final speeches to the General Assembly he quoted Dag Hammarskjöld's words that, "In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action" and added: "We might well say that the road to mission passes this way also".²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90; cit. J.H. Oldham & B.D. Gibson, *The Remaking of Man in Africa* (Oxford, 1931), 138-39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

²¹ R.H. Tawney, cit. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 27.

²² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1968, Verbatim Record, 477.

3. Education

This determination to avoid dualism and achieve a “bifocal” approach in the missionary enterprise found particular expression in regard to education. From its earliest years, Scottish involvement in overseas mission had been marked by an emphasis on education. As Andrew Walls remarks: “For many other missions, education was simply one branch of missionary activity, made necessary by the mission’s other activities, or required as the price of its presence in the local setting. For the Scottish missions, at least for a substantial and determinative part of their existence, education *was* mission”.²³ Dougall is a prime exemplar. His first assignment after ordination was to serve as secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission enquiring into the development of education in Africa. In the Duff lectures given after his retirement it was clear that his passion for education as a central plank in the missionary enterprise was as strong as ever.

Arthur Wilkie, the influential Scottish educational missionary who served at Calabar, the Gold Coast and Lovedale in South Africa, was acknowledged by Dougall as an inspiration and mentor in this area. In the Duff lectures he recalled the strong claims which Wilkie had made for the educational dimension of Christian mission: “Education is not outside the primary plan of Christian missions, but lies at the very heart of it. It is the finest God-given instrument for the evangelisation and upbuilding of a new Africa”.²⁴ Dougall affirmed this emphasis and stressed particularly the function of education as countering dualism: “Education is, as it were, the bridge between God and the world. It shows the Church’s concern for man as a whole in society. It affirms by practical deeds the fundamental relatedness of the Gospel to every aspect of the community’s life. With all its defects the Church’s educational effort is still an effective protest against the divorce of

²³ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (New York and Edinburgh, 2002), 262.

²⁴ Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 20.

knowledge and revelation, works and faith, sense and spirit, individual salvation and social righteousness”.²⁵

Dougall was alert to the fact that the compartmentalization of knowledge which characterised the European Enlightenment was at odds with traditional African modes of thought and that education which did not include religious reference points as an integral element would have very limited effect. In his early book on religious education in Africa he quotes from Wilkie’s address at the Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928: “To give the African, with his characteristic outlook on reality, a training divorced from religion would be a crime”.²⁶ This was a theme which struck a deep chord with Dougall and he remained convinced that the African outlook called for a holistic approach to education with religion at its core.

At a time when education would increasingly be seen as a function of the state with churches becoming more focussed on directly religious and ecclesiastical concerns, Dougall held out for the distinctive role of the Christian school. In his view there was too much at stake for the educational effort of Christian mission to be relinquished, notwithstanding his emphasis on the primacy of evangelism.²⁷ Thinking specifically of the case of Africa, he wrote:

Whether in the new self-governing territories there is going to be a sensitive public conscience may well be decided in the schools. The future of minorities, the possibility of freedom of worship, the right to voice unpopular opinions, the consciousness of belonging to a universal and not to a nationalist Church – these are the sort of questions which a Christian education cannot avoid. Education

²⁵ Dougall, “Education and Evangelism”, 319.

²⁶ J.W.C. Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa* (London and New York, n.d. [1929]), 70.

²⁷ For a discussion of the tension between the evangelistic and the educational emphasis in the Scottish missionary tradition see Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester & New York, 2004), 260-74.

provides the link between religion and life. The power to stimulate imagination and to inspire a passion for truth, the encouragement of friendships and the search for a just social order – these are among the aims of the Christian school and there is only one Master who can give them life and reality. That is why Christian education has an essential place in the Christian mission.²⁸

While education in Scotland was to become increasingly secularized, Presbyterian Churches in Africa took this vision to heart and, often against great odds, sustained and developed the educational programmes begun by the missionaries.

4. Indigenization and Contextualization

Dougall's African experience left him impressed with the need for the indigenization of the faith. Like many sensitive European missionaries, he was struck by the deep religious awareness of African communities and by the strength of African traditional religion. His early writings anticipate themes with which the first generation of academic African theology would be occupied when it emerged in the second half of the century:

Would it not be well for us to study the characteristic Native expressions of reverence and awe with a view to their use in our worship? How would the unsophisticated African show his consciousness of dependence, his reverence and respect, in approaching a Holy Teacher, a Wonderful Friend, a Merciful Lord? What forms of prayer did he naturally employ in religious ceremonies? How did he crave the blessings of his God or spirits? How did he visibly embody the sense of communion with the Supernatural? Could we not employ some of the usages of Native ceremonial, adapting them to Christian purposes? This has been done in some parts of Africa, but the method might be greatly

²⁸ Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 35.

extended. The Rain Ceremony in the case of the Lomwe tribe in Portuguese East Africa was converted into the Christian Harvest Thanksgiving. Just as in the former case men, women and children, even the babies, came forward or were carried to the Christian table or altar, each laying with his own hands the contributions of eggs or grain or fowls or fruit which as individuals and as a community they offered in gratitude to God.²⁹

In expressing this longing for a truly African Christianity, as well as for a Christian Africa, Dougall was representative of the best of the Scottish missionary tradition. He was prepared to articulate its theological implications. Far from a *tabula rasa* approach to the missionary task, Dougall argued that “We will find that their worship becomes most truly spiritual and moral when we do not deny or condemn but expand the meaning of what they already accept, reveal the best which is already implied and carry them further by means of the momentum of their Native aspirations and needs. Our worship will employ elements of the traditional practice of western denominations, but its character should be recognisably African”.³⁰ In forming such an approach in the 1920s, Dougall anticipated the theological direction which African churches would take when they gained responsibility for their own affairs later in the century. Under his influence the Foreign Mission Committee would come to recognise as fundamental “the problem of how to pray for and work for a Church which the African people feel to be their own and not a foreign importation, and for an African ministry which understands, better than any missionary can understand, what goes on in the African mind and how its deepest longings and fears can be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”.³¹ Years later, in one of his final speeches to the General Assembly, he offered his mature reflection on this topic, so determinative for missionary work: “We do not take Christ to Asia or Africa or Latin America, to the Jew or

²⁹ Dougall, *Religious Education in Africa*, 24-25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

³¹ *Reports to the 1958 General Assembly*, .

the Arab, to the Hindu, the Muslim, or the Buddhist. He is there already and the best service we can render is to help them recognise Him. He is God's representative in and to all mankind for He is before all things and in Him all things hold together".³²

Though the term "contextualization" had not yet been introduced to theological discussion, Dougall anticipated this approach. He was constantly struggling to understand the developments unfolding around him and to discern their meaning in relation to the missionary purposes of God. His strong sense of all history being God's history meant that the contemporary context must always be taken with the utmost seriousness: "To proclaim Christ as Lord is to say that He is Lord of the revolutions in Africa and that He is at the centre of African history now".³³

As was frequently the case, it was Joe Oldham whose words Dougall found apposite in explaining why the gospel can only be understood in context:

It is forgotten that [religious] beliefs can *only* be expressed, not merely in a particular language but in a particular set of unspoken presuppositions which we call a conceptual framework. If the basic experience of men, their ways of apprehending and feeling about the world undergo a change, then the traditional expressions of conscious beliefs must also change if they are to be understood. In the world, as it is today, there can be no future for the proclamation of the Christian message unless it is accompanied by an intellectual effort of understanding and interpretation, consciously undertaken and far surpassing in scope and difficulty the great linguistic achievements of the foreign missionary period.³⁴

³² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, *Verbatim Record*, 506-07.

³³ Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 87.

³⁴ J.H.Oldham article in *The Student Movement* (summer 1960); cit. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 106.

Such an understanding led Dougall to the radical realisation that the Christian message requires to be constantly re-thought and re-stated as it is introduced to a new situation. As he wrote to Ronald Orchard in 1958 “Absurd as it may seem at this hour of the day, I think we need to look again at the question, What is the Gospel?... isn’t it true that many questions of missionary policy vex us because we are not quite clear what the Gospel is?”³⁵ This is *the* question prompted by contextualization. It is when the specific challenges of a changing context are taken to heart that the question of “what the gospel is” becomes the burning one.

5. The Missionary Vocation

A major development which occupied much of Dougall’s attention was the changing role of the missionary. Whereas his own missionary formation had taken place at a time when it was assumed that Western missionaries would direct the work of the missions for many years to come, from the late 1940s high on the agenda was the need to hand over authority to the indigenous church. It was time to rethink the missionary vocation. Dougall quoted the new definition offered by Lesslie Newbigin who described the missionary as “the agent of the help which one part of the Church sends to another for the discharge of the common missionary task”.³⁶

While recognising that, in future, missionaries would go not to establish their own missions but rather to serve the indigenous church, Dougall was very anxious to sustain the traditional understanding of the missionary vocation. Against a trend which suggested that missionaries might serve for shorter periods of time, Dougall included this protest in the Report to the General Assembly of 1948: “In spite of the attraction which short service offers, it cannot be regarded as satisfactory for the

³⁵ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. R.K. Orchard, International Missionary Council, 17 March 1958.

³⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World* (International Missionary Council, 1958), 47; cit. Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 93.

Younger Churches to have people who do not stay long enough to speak the vernacular and who may not be fully committed to missionary service, though willing for a time to go abroad".³⁷ Counselling one young missionary, he stressed the importance of learning the local language: "Inability to speak the vernacular will be a severe handicap for you in getting to real grips with the people's most intimate needs and now's the time to determine that it shall be tackled".³⁸ Counselling another, he emphasised the value of long experience in missionary work: "All of us make a succession of mistakes in Africa during our first years of missionary service and no ability can take the place of the cumulative understanding of the African himself which grows with the years".³⁹

Underlying this emphasis was a particular understanding of the missionary vocation. As Dougall wrote to William Arnott at Lovedale: "As I see it, the missionary vocation in the specific and technical sense involves a man or woman in responsibility both to the Church which sends him and to the Church which receives him, and his appointment is made under a contract which is quite different from that of the lay Christian in other work, however splendid and sacrificial that latter service may be, and there is no judgement of value implied in the reservation of the word 'missionary' for the former".⁴⁰ This commitment to the specificity of missionary service had been reflected in the Report of the Foreign Mission Committee to the 1952 General Assembly: "There must surely be a profound distinction between the relationships of Older and Younger Churches which are only linked by the casual and informal contacts of individual Christian laymen, however open their discipleship, and those Churches which are bound together by the presence of a missionary group on a solemn contract of service, offered, supported and guaranteed by the Older Church and

³⁷ *Reports to the 1948 General Assembly*, 371.

³⁸ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. G. Lowson Watt, 3 January 1946.

³⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. Norman C. Macrae, Calabar, 5 February 1946.

⁴⁰ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. William Arnott, Lovedale, 21 January 1957.

accepted, integrated and commissioned by the Younger”.⁴¹ While he rejoiced that strong indigenous churches were emerging in the various mission fields, Dougall fully expected that a corps of Scottish missionaries would continue to play a necessary role.

He was reluctant to acknowledge the new reality that, in the words of Andrew Walls: “The missionary no longer answers a lifetime call, and certainly does not get a visa for it”.⁴² Missionary recruitment was already becoming a major issue in Dougall’s time. As he prepared for a visit to West Africa in 1953 he confessed to John Beattie, the Acting Secretary at Calabar: “I wish I could come with more promises of help but Africa Committee yesterday really was most depressing, a succession of requests for more money which we could not provide and more people that we cannot recruit”.⁴³ This proved to be typical of the post-War years, as David Lyon comments: “The sad failure of the Church to respond adequately with finance to the enormous opportunities that were being opened for world mission, and to the great needs that were so apparent, was matched only by its failure to recruit men and women, suitable and in sufficient numbers, to serve as missionaries overseas”.⁴⁴ Nonetheless Dougall persisted in hoping that the pattern of missionary service of earlier years could be sustained. Timothy Yates’ assessment of Max Warren in this regard could equally be applied to Dougall: “The reader is left with the impression of a Canute, standing for a noble ideal of service but unable to stem this new tide, for whom the ideal was unrealistic in a possibly more brittle and certainly more mobile generation”.⁴⁵

This was the emphasis which characterized his years as General Secretary. As Convener of the Overseas Council, however, in the late 1960s he struck a different note: “The Overseas Council still acts as

⁴¹ *Reports to the 1952 General Assembly*, 370.

⁴² Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York and Edinburgh, 1996), 260.

⁴³ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. John Beattie, Acting Secretary, Calabar, 1 July 1953.

⁴⁴ David H.S. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision* (Edinburgh, 1998), 113.

⁴⁵ Yates, *Christian Mission*, 143.

agent for Christian Churches which ask us to recruit ministers, doctors, teachers and others for their service. But missionary work is not the monopoly of full time professionals, and it is vital that the Church here should understand this for two reasons: (1) that it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure entry permits for missionaries as such in some countries; and (2) because it is in the common life of society and not in some department labelled 'religion' that His witness is to be given and He is to reign as Lord".⁴⁶ This new direction in thinking of the missionary vocation was not something which Dougall was able to develop. He did, however, indicate that the time for a different pattern of missionary service might be arriving.

6. Church and Mission

The relation of church and mission was a vital area of discussion in these years. The Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 caught the spirit of the time when it pronounced that: "We should cease to speak of *missions* and *churches* and avoid this dichotomy not only in our thinking but also in our actions. We should now speak about the mission of the Church".⁴⁷ This answered a question which had been ripening as the twentieth century advanced: what is the relationship between the Western missions and the indigenous churches to which their witness gave rise? As Roland Allen had provocatively and prophetically stated the issue: "are we actually planting new churches or merely perpetuating a mission?"⁴⁸ Such questions were rather uncomfortable for the missionary establishment but Dougall was not unsympathetic. As he wrote to William Stewart, a leading Scottish missionary in India, early in 1950: "I also have been reading Roland Allen. It is a book which must make you think if you read it with any sympathy. A great deal of our work has probably

⁴⁶ Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, Verbatim Record, 506.

⁴⁷ *The Missionary Obligation of the Church, Willingen, Germany* (London, 1952), 40; cit. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, 75.

⁴⁸ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (London, 1912; new edn. London, 1960), v.

missed the mark because it has not left the indigenous Church more responsible and more alive to the call of evangelism. It is not sufficient, as you say, to appeal for missionaries and funds in order to prepare the leaders when in the process we obscure the purpose for which they are being trained. Indeed a great deal of what we do ourselves has confused the Church at home perhaps as to the real objects of missionary work. But I feel sure there is some flaw in Roland Allen's argument or in the way he works out its implications for it would seem as if there ought to be no organised missionary work nor any missionary societies".⁴⁹

The question had already been clearly stated at the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928.⁵⁰ For the Church of Scotland, however, it was dramatic changes twenty years later which brought the issue to the centre. Indian independence in 1947 prompted a wholesale rethink of its way of working in its premier mission field. Still more abrupt was to be the handover from mission to church in China as all missionaries departed in 1949–50. Surveying his time in office Dougall observed that, "Amidst all the immense and bewildering varieties of circumstance and stage of development the two constant factors already achieved or plainly emerging are the autonomous Church in place of the mission, and the successor State instead of the colonial Government".⁵¹

This was something with which he had been faced at the outset of his time as General Secretary, particularly in regard to India. The great change coming to mission-church relations was recognised by the Foreign Mission Committee in its Report to the 1946 General Assembly:

Whatever the method of attaining self-government, it is assumed that Christian missions, being associated with the West, will be subject to restrictions from which a British Government in India has

⁴⁹ J.W.C. Dougall to Rev. William Stewart, Nagpur, 11 January 1950.

⁵⁰ See *The Relations between the Younger and Older Churches, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council* (London, 1928), vol. iii.

⁵¹ Dougall, *Christians in the African Revolution*, 45.

shielded them. That being so, the future of the missionary concern in India becomes essentially a question of the Indian Church and how it may acquit itself in the new and unknown future.... there can be no protection by any action we or other Churches in the West may take. What we can do is to welcome the Indian Church into the councils and discussions of the Church Universal, and meantime we can strengthen the things by which it may be most encouraged to give freely where it has freely received, to grow in the fellowship which has 'no frontiers except those it exists to remove,' and so to become the servant of God for the service and redemption of all the peoples of India regardless of caste or community or race.⁵²

At the same time came a recognition that this new pattern of relationship to church in India would be both essential and enriching: "We Christians of the Older Churches can no more stand alone in this post-Christian era without the fellowship of the Indian, Chinese, and African Churches than they, without us, can be perfected in their mission. We need each other as we need Him who is able to make both Home and Overseas one.... Is this not God's call to His people to close their ranks and to rejoice in their conversion from individualism and isolationism into the world-wide fellowship of giving and receiving, which is both the mirror and the means of His healing, forgiving, and transforming love for all the nations?"⁵³ It was in this context that Dougall welcomed the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948: "... the new unity is given that we may more effectively proclaim the Lordship of Christ to all nations".⁵⁴

Already in 1947 the Foreign Mission Committee's Report to the General Assembly was anticipating the new emphasis on partnership in mission when it spoke of the "worldwide fellowship of giving and receiving" to which we belong, as "both the mirror and the means of

⁵² *Reports to the 1946 General Assembly*, 364.

⁵³ *Reports to the 1947 General Assembly*, 345.

⁵⁴ *Reports to the 1949 General Assembly*, 338.

[God's] healing, forgiving and transforming love".⁵⁵ India had been the cradle of such an understanding but soon it was applied to all of the Church's missionary work. By 1950 the missions in Nyasaland (later Malawi) were moving in a similar direction: "In Livingstonia, as also in Blantyre, much thought is being given to the new position of the Church in the forefront of missionary effort. The news of progress in the Indian fields in the direction of integration, together with the lessons of African experience in the partnership of Church and Mission have led Mission Councils to look ahead. They ask what arrangements will encourage the Church to assume more responsibility and how the Mission and the missionary can best fit in to a policy in which the Church is central".⁵⁶ This set the agenda for the remainder of the twentieth century as responsibility was passed to the indigenous churches which had emerged through the influence of the Scottish missions and the relationship between the two came to be understood as one of partnership.

While Dougall played a leading role in promoting the handover of responsibility from the mission to the church, he was equally concerned that mission should be found at the heart of the church's concerns. He was fond of quoting the Foreign Mission Committee Minute of 1947 which stated that: "The Church of Scotland has from the beginning regarded its foreign missionary enterprise as an integral part of the life of the Church, springing of necessity from the nature of the Church itself. It has in the same way placed at the centre of its concern the bringing into being of living branches of the Church in other lands which should accept for themselves the same missionary obligation the discharge of which is one of the essential marks of a living Church".⁵⁷ When writing to Norman Goodall of the London Missionary Society in the mid-1950s about the burning question of the integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council,

⁵⁵ *Reports to the 1947 General Assembly*, 345.

⁵⁶ *Reports to the 1950 General Assembly*, 389-90.

⁵⁷ Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, Minute 8799, 15 April 1947; cit. e.g. *Reports to the 1957 General Assembly*, 453.

Dougall was led to make a telling remark on the place of foreign mission in the life of the Church of Scotland. In a context where many feared that the integration of the International Missionary Council into the World Council of Churches would lead to a sidelining of distinctively missionary concerns, Dougall commented: "I would agree that the goal is a single ecumenical structure ... and that the creation of a WCC Commission on the World Mission of the Church offers at least the broad outline of a solution". He then continued:

I think there is some analogy, though I would not press it too far, between the position you put forward as the goal of the WCC-IMC relations and the FMC [Foreign Mission Committee] position in the Church of Scotland as contrasted with the missionary 'society' organisation. I know only too well the disadvantages of the arrangement by which the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland is responsible for all its missionary activity. Where the Church is not as a whole alive to the call of the overseas guilds, the missionary enthusiast has a stiff fight against apathy and indifference. He has no appeal to a special constituency of supporters. There is always the danger of ecclesiastical narrowness and conservatism, and the competition of other nearer and more pressing claims. And yet I think it is worthwhile to be a Church Committee and to be able to press for the same attention as the Home Board or Maintenance of the Ministry. The 'Society' type of organisation, though it gains a lot in concentration and special appeal, has forfeited (or so it seems to me) the position that the missionary concern is the concern of the whole Church and that the missionary is the Church's representative working for Churches overseas, which are themselves responsible for missionary expansion.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ J.W.C.Dougall to Rev. Norman Goodall, 1 December 1954.

This realistic recognition of the difficulties of integrating mission into the regular organisation of the Church is coupled with an appreciation of the great strengths of this approach. Dougall saw the formation of the World Council of Churches as a new opportunity to “overcome the dualism which relegates missions to one group while the Church as a whole goes on as before”.⁵⁹ This was something which he believed could be achieved by the model practised by the Church of Scotland. It did mean, however, that the cause of mission rested squarely on the responsibility of the Church: “... we cannot expect the missionary enterprise to go ahead until there is a change in the Church at home”.⁶⁰

Conclusion

James Dougall could be regarded as a conservative, even Canute-like, figure. His work could be understood as an effort to fight a rearguard action to maintain the foreign mission enterprise of the Church of Scotland when trends both at home and abroad demonstrated that its time had passed. However, amidst an approach that greatly valued the tradition of missionary work built up over the years, there emerged strands which proved to be forward-looking and prophetic – the indigenization of the faith, the contextualization of the gospel, the church as the agent of mission, partnership of churches in mission and new models of missionary service. The extent to which Dougall was an architect of post-war Church of Scotland foreign mission policy can be gauged by observing the conclusions of its 1999 Partner Church Consultation, held at St Andrews.⁶¹ Its focus on themes such as evangelism, education, holistic mission and prophetic ministry, which had been so prominent in Dougall’s thinking, demonstrate the extent of his influence. Above all, at a time when the Church’s foreign mission enterprise was apparently going into decline, he was able to set it in a theological context which opened up new horizons: “The mission of the

⁵⁹ Cit. Lyon, *In Pursuit of a Vision*, 73.

⁶⁰ J.W.C. Dougall to Dr J.C. Alexander, 30 November 1945.

⁶¹ *Partner Church Consultation Report* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of World Mission, 1999).

Church does not originate in Edinburgh or in Geneva or in Rome, but in the eternal will of God the Father and in the historic mission of the Son into the world and in the dispersion of the primitive Church in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is but one mission in all six continents, which means that all Christ's people in every land are, or ought to be, involved in a fellowship of faith for the advancement of his kingdom at home and in all the world".⁶² This enabled him to call the Church, as one episode in mission drew towards a close, to look to "...the next missionary impulse..."⁶³ In this way he served as a bridging figure, connecting the Church's missionary tradition to new frontiers and new ways of working which now appeared on the horizon.

Edinburgh

⁶² Church of Scotland General Assembly 1969, Verbatim Record, 505.

⁶³ Church of Scotland General Assembly 1968, Verbatim Record, 477.